



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management



Photo- Ed DeVries
Shiawassee NWR

Saginaw Watershed Lake Sturgeon Project

During the month of May, Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski, Adam Kowalski, Aaron Woldt, Susan Wells, James Boase and Project Leader Jerry McClain completed the lake sturgeon project in the Saginaw Watershed. The project is funded through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN). Anecdotal evidence suggests that lake sturgeon use the Saginaw watershed but very little is known about the importance of this watershed to the lake sturgeon population within Lake Huron.

This project required a lot of coordination and cooperation by many groups and individuals. Partners on this project include Michigan DNR, DOW Chemical, the city of Frankenmuth, WIN, the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, and local volunteers.

Beginning in April, Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski, Adam Kowalski, James Boase, Aaron Woldt, and Project Leader Jerry McClain began deploying and retrieving egg mats and set lines in an attempt to document lake sturgeon usage of this watershed. The project concluded during the last week of May. Twenty four egg mats were deployed on the Cass River at the Frankenmuth dam and 48 egg mats were deployed on the Tittabawassee River at the DOW dam. In addition to the egg mats, two set lines were fished at the confluence of the Saginaw and Tittabawassee Rivers and one set line was fished at the confluence of the Saginaw and Cass River. Egg mats were checked weekly and set lines were fished daily. Alpena FRO staff examined the egg mats for the presence of lake sturgeon eggs when they were retrieved. No lake sturgeon eggs were found but non-target species had deposited eggs on the mats. No sub adult and adult lake sturgeon were caught using the set lines either but a few non-target species were caught. However, Kowalski and volunteer Larry Dinsmore witnessed an adult lake sturgeon below the DOW dam in Midland on May 19th. He was unable to net this fish but it did provide evidence that lake sturgeon are present within the system.

This project was funded for three years by the NFWF and WIN and will conclude in 2007. By that time Alpena FRO should be able to determine if the lake sturgeon spotted within the Saginaw watershed are actually utilizing this system for reproductive purposes or are just migrant fish that wander in the system periodically.

This project is another example of Alpena FRO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities for "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management".

Scott Koproski

Cooperation with Native Americans

Alpena FRO Provides Assistance to Huron Potawatomi Tribe for Wildlife Management Planning

On May 3, Project Leader McClain was contacted by Ben Skarp, Biologist with the Huron Potawatomi Tribe in southwest Michigan, seeking assistance in development of a wildlife management plan for the tribe. Mr. Skarp has received funding through the Service's Tribal Wildlife Grant program to develop a tribal wildlife and habitat management plan for the tribe. McClain provided verbal guidance and electronic links to existing fish and wildlife management plans that will help Skarp develop his planning documents. Alpena FRO is Region 3's lead field station for technical assistance to the Huron Potawatomi Tribe and Mr. Skarp was provided Project Leader McClain's name by John Leonard, Region 3's Native American Coordinator.

Providing technical assistance to tribal governments helps fulfill the Service's federal Native American trust responsibilities and is consistent with the "Cooperation with Native Americans" priority of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Jerry McClain

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management



Partners for Fish and Wildlife Presents to Life-Long Learners

Biologist Enterline gave an overview of the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program to sixty members of the Life-Long Learners Club in Alpena, MI on May 19. The Life-Long Learners are a group of retired individuals in Alpena and surrounding towns that meet once a month for a lecture and social gathering.

The lectures cover a large variety of topics from arts to history to environmental issues. Enterline's presentation covered wetland, grassland, endangered species habitat, and riverine restoration in Michigan through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. The talk was well-received with many good questions and several requests for site visits on members' private property.

Education about aquatic habitat restoration projects contribute toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" and "Public Use" components of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Heather Enterline

Partnerships and Accountability



Alpena FRO Assists with Coast Guard Training Exercises

On May 20th, Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski and Aaron Woldt assisted in training activities of the U.S. Coast Guard – Alpena Station. Chief Petty Officer (CPO) Brad Adams asked Alpena FRO to provide a crew and vessel to assist in performing search and rescue drills for guardsman temporarily assigned to the Alpena Station. Each year the Coast Guard has

additional guardsman assigned to the station to protect the boating community in the Alpena area. The Alpena Station is the only post between St. Ignace and Tawas, MI on Lake Huron. They execute over 50 search and rescues annually and this post is vital in keeping the boating community safe in northern Lake Huron.

Fishery Biologists Koproski and Woldt took a vessel on Thunder Bay, Lake Huron and posed as a vessel in distress for the exercises. Radio communication took place between the Alpena Station base, the Alpena Station vessel, and Alpena FRO's vessel during the training. A variety of towing exercises were performed and a number of emergency situations were presented by Koproski and Woldt to the Alpena Station guardsman. Each exercise was representative of search and rescue operations that the Alpena Station deals with annually. Without the help of the Alpena FRO staff and vessel the Alpena Station may not be adequately prepared for the 2005 boating season.

The assistance provided by Alpena FRO staff for the training exercise is another example of coordination between federal agencies and is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future for "Partnerships and Accountability".

Scott Koproski

Appreciation Dinner

During May 2005, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski started preparing for the 8th Annual Commercial Fishers Appreciation Dinner. The Alpena FRO annually hosts this dinner for Michigan state-licensed and tribal commercial fishers that assist the Service with lake sturgeon work in Lake Huron. Kowalski reserved a city park to hold the dinner, hired a caterer, and ordered prizes and gifts such as life vests, rain gear, t-shirts, and coffee mugs. All items were purchased with volunteer funds.

Commercial fishers encounter lake sturgeon as by-catch during normal fishing operations for lake whitefish, yellow perch, and channel catfish. The fishers volunteer time by tagging and collecting biological information on lake sturgeon by-catch. Currently, 12 commercial fishers operating 19 boats participate in the study. Approximately 411 lake sturgeon have been tagged since the program began in 1995.

This partnership between the Service and Lake Huron commercial fishers to track and monitor lake sturgeon has been in place since 1995, and is consistent with the “Partnerships and Accountability” priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future to develop and improve long-term partnerships.

Adam Kowalski

Public Use



Service Provides Fishery Education Program for Saginaw High School

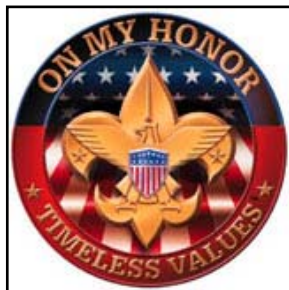
Alpena Fishery Resources Office (FRO) and Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) provided a hands-on educational program about Fisheries for students from Buena Vista High School in Saginaw, Michigan on May 9-10, 2005. The students, their teachers and instructors met with Alpena FRO Fishery Biologist Bowen at the Shiawassee NWR to take part in the program. Fish sampling and many activities associated with fisheries were demonstrated.

A variety of sampling gears including gillnets, trap nets, minnow traps, seines, and trawls were on display and their use discussed with students. Students also had an opportunity to participate in seining activities at the refuge. Fish were on hand for examination and identification. Fishery career requirements were discussed as well.

This project was sponsored by the Service's Challenge Cost-Share Grant program, Buena Vista High School, Alpena FRO, and Shiawassee NWR.

This project provided inner city students with an opportunity to observe and take part in environmental conservation. This project is consistent with the “Public Use” priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

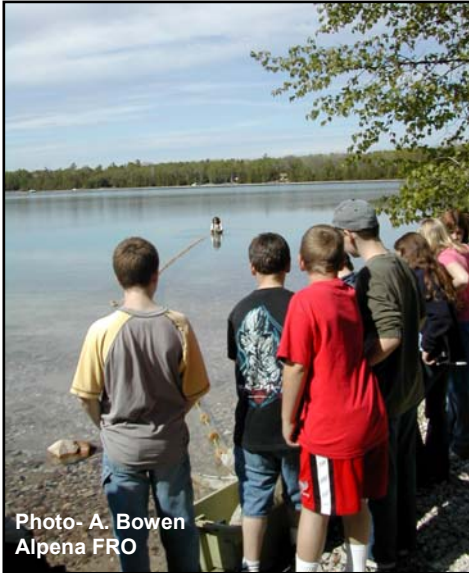
Anjanette Bowen



Scout Fest 2005

Alpena FRO participated in the annual Scout Fest activities held on May 14, 2005 in Alpena, Michigan. Over 200 Boy and Girl Scouts and their families from across northeastern Michigan participated in the event. Fish and Wildlife Biologist Heather Enterline and Fishery Biologist Anjanette Bowen provided hands-on educational games and information to teach Scouts about native fish species and their habitats. Information was also provided on invasive species and the problems associated with them. The Service booth was popular and well visited. Many organizations were present at the event to educate and allow Scouts to experience community activities. Public education via "Public Use" is an important component of the Service Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Anjanette Bowen



Seining with Lincoln Elementary

A group of 30 fifth grade students from Lincoln Elementary, in Alpena, Michigan attended an overnight retreat at Camp Chicigamee. Two days were spent camping and participating in a variety of outdoor and hands on educational activities. This included canoeing, fishing, orienteering, and group building games. Biologists Wells and Bowen participated in the event on May 26th by educating the group on projects at the Alpena FRO and fishery concerns within the Great Lakes Basin. The kids then participated in a seining demonstration. A one-hundred foot seine was used to sample the shoreline of Lake Esau where the camp is situated. Over one hundred fish were collected including spottail shiners, emerald shiners, and rainbow darters. The students were then asked a series of

questions on the habitat types for each of the fish. After the demonstration a packet of games and information regarding the USFWS was handed out to each student.

This accomplishment provided an educational and outreach opportunity for local students and adults associated with a summer camp. We utilized a hands-on approach to teaching these 30 students about fish and their habitat requirements. They were also exposed to ongoing projects at the Alpena FRO and the different sampling methods used by the staff and provided an outlet to educate and interact with youth groups on issues regarding Great Lakes aquatic resources. This project addresses the Fisheries Vision priority for "Public Use".

Susan Wells



Alpena FRO Provides Presentation on Aquatic Invasive Species in Northeastern Michigan

On May 3, Fishery Biologist Bowen provided a Power Point presentation titled "Aquatic Invasive Species in Northeastern Michigan" to a group of approximately 20 interested fishermen and water users at the Alcona Township Hall in Alcona County, Michigan. The presentation was advertised in the Alcona Review and with posters at area businesses. The presentation lasted about an hour and a half. The goal was to provide public

education about invasive species found in Northeastern Michigan -- including how to identify them, trends in their abundance, what can be done to prevent their spread, and what should be done if they are captured. Literature on the various invasive species was available and the public could view preserved specimens.

Public education is an important means of combating aquatic invasive species and preventing their spread. This effort addresses the "Public Use", "Aquatic Species Conservation and

Alpena FRO, May 2005



Management", and "Partnerships and Accountability" components of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Anjanette Bowen